



GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

MAY 2006



USAID's support for natural resources management in Malawi has proved to be indispensable in not only preserving vital carbon sinks but also in stimulating economic development. Through improved management practices, training, and technical assistance, the people of Malawi have learned the importance of undertaking income-creating sustainable development measures.

USAID's partners in climate change activities in Malawi include*:

- Development Alternatives, Inc.
- Washington State University
- Community Partnerships for Sustainable Resource Management (COMPASS)
- Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)
- Department of National Parks and Wildlife
- Malawi Agro-Forestry Extension Project (MAFE)

* Because partners change as new activities arise, this list of partners is not comprehensive.

Background. The southern African country of Malawi faces environmental challenges such as deforestation, land degradation, water pollution from agricultural run-off, and siltation of spawning grounds that endangers fish populations. Coupled with a low capacity to confront these challenges and ongoing political transformation, Malawi is in need of international assistance. In response, USAID began its program of assistance to Malawi in the early 1960s, and is working to help the country achieve sustainable economic growth. This is being accomplished, in part, by increasing agricultural incomes and enhancing the management and conservation of natural resources. Natural resources such as forests, for example, are beneficial to the climate because they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store carbon both above ground in their biomass and in the soils below. USAID helps protect Malawi's resources against further environmental degradation by building local capacity to manage forest and agricultural resources in a more sustainable manner. USAID works with many sectors of society to achieve these goals.

Sector-Specific Climate Change Activities. To increase community and private sector involvement in natural resources management, USAID has worked with the government of Malawi to strengthen the institutional framework within which community-based natural resources management programs are designed, implemented, and monitored. Training and technical assistance have been provided in enterprise development, sustainable agricultural practices, forest management, wildlife conservation, soil erosion control, water conservation, fisheries, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). As a result, through support for Community Partnerships for Sustainable Resource Management (COMPASS), land use and forest management activities have succeeded in protecting wildlife reserves and natural ecosystems from illegal harvesting while providing income-earning opportunities to rural communities.

In 2005, COMPASS II, the follow-on to COMPASS, continued to promote decentralized forest management and a shared commitment to sustainable resources with 65 forest resource management plans underway and more agreements expected. Local colleges provided field-based training on assessing the resources, while district staff underwent mapping training to define forest areas under agreement. With the launch of COMPASS II, some resources were provided to hasten the Government of Malawi's devolution of authority for management of forest resources to relevant communities. Communities situated adjacent to and within forest areas will have ownership of the resources and/or management rights to in order to foster sustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products and ensure a decline in

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Increased training capacity.** The number of community members trained under the COMPASS project in community-based natural resources management exceeded the projected end target by 208%, from 1,867 in 2004 to 5,755 in 2005. More than half trained were women, who often are more acutely affected by localized forest losses.
- **Economic growth.** Communities and households are getting additional income from sales of natural resource products while maintaining healthy forests and catchments. Total revenues earned by participating households increased from \$55,431 in 2004 to \$200,567 in 2005.
- **Water conservation and management.** A diverse partnership between local NGOs and the private sector is training the community to improve its use of water, soils, forests, fisheries and wildlife, as well as diversify its income base through small scale irrigation, bee keeping, agro-processing, tree nurseries and agro-forestry, and soil conservation.

For more information on Malawi, visit USAID/Malawi's Mission Web site at:
<http://www.usaid.gov/mw/>

the rate of forest degradation, loss, and eventually a reversal of current trends. This will improve forest cover in watershed areas and help to ameliorate water shortages during drought periods and flooding during wet periods.

The Chia Lagoon Watershed Project, a program dedicated to increasing rural livelihoods, addressed many issues relevant to climate change including the problems caused by overuse of land, cultivation on steep slopes and stream banks, poor farming practices and increased incidents of insect-borne diseases. A diverse partnership between local NGOs and the private sector is training the community to improve its use of water, soils, forests, fisheries and wildlife, as well as diversify its income base through small-scale irrigation, beekeeping, agro-processing, tree nurseries and agro-forestry, and soil conservation. Nearly 8,000 people have benefited from the program so far, which has also succeeded in helping farmers to produce improved yields per hectare of land cultivated.

In order to contribute to improved smallholder agricultural productivity and food security, the Malawi Agroforestry Extension Project promoted agro-forestry projects among communities. The USAID-supported Resource Center not only provides information on best practices in agro-forestry technologies, it also has sold over 30 tons of tree seeds for replenishing degraded forests. Diversification of livelihoods and increase in per capita income can be expected to increase the resilience of local communities and lower their vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change.

USAID has also supported the government in implementing a comprehensive policy and legislative reform program. These policies have shifted the rights and responsibilities of managing the country's natural resources from the government to the local communities and end-users. In 2004, with USAID supported efforts through the Strategic Objective "Increased Sustainable Use Conservation and Management of Renewable Natural Resources," Malawi produced a National Strategy for Sustainable Development document which the government launched in September 2004. USAID also supported the Revision of the Forestry Act of 1997 to give rural communities an opportunity to establish and implement management plans for forests on customary land and allow for communities to participate in co-managing state-owned forests.